3

MISTAKES TO AVOID
WHEN HIRING A PET SITTER

MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN HIRING A PET SITTER

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THE THREE MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN HIRING A PET SITTER

Hello and happy tails!

I'm so happy that you decided to download our free special report, The 3 Mistakes To Avoid When Hiring a Pet Sitter.

My intention in sharing the 3 points covered in this report is to provide you with what I think will be immensely valuable as you move forward in the process of hiring a pet care professional i.e. a pet sitter, dog walker, etc. Caring for another's pets and in some cases, their homes are a HUGE responsibility. You will want to be sure that the person you entrust with this duty is honest, reliable, dependable, mature, organized, diligent, and conscientious. No easy task to be sure, but if you heed the advice outlined in this report, you will be much more likely to successfully begin the process of establishing a favorable, long-term partnership with a reputable and dependable individual or company.

In 2014 I launched Golden Days Pet Services as a super small business amid the Great Recession. Around this same time, I was laid off from my position as a Senior Executive with a financial services company here in Orange County. I love animals and I had always wanted to have my own business. So, I took a deep breath and decided to go for it. With hundreds of five-star reviews from our amazing clients Golden Days, Pet Services has grown quickly, especially considering that it was just me doing everything, to a well-established business serving over a thousand clients primarily in Orange County CA but some from as far away as Canada and New York. As I look back it's amazing to me how we grew so quickly with virtually no marketing effort on my part. All of our clients came from referrals and from the amazing reviews and feedback we received. I share this with you not to brag but because I think it's important to share our history and for you know a bit about how this all came to be. Golden Days Pet Services has evolved and endured many phases of business growth, and as such, I've personally experienced the growing pains and learnings that come from growing a company.

Throughout this report, I frequently refer to Golden Days operations and our business procedures. I do this only as a point of reference and not to push my services on you in any way. I want you to make the best possible choice for your family whether it is using Golden Days Pet Services or another pet care provider. I just have tons of valuable knowledge that I've acquired over the years in this industry and I want to share it with you!

I wish you the best of luck in finding the ideal pet lover to care for your furry pals. Big hugs to our furry, feathered and amphibious friends,

Michael O'Neil is the owner of Iconic Pets Inc. dba Golden DaysPet Services a thriving pet care business in Orange County CA. He has also earned a bachelor's degree from Arizona State University, in Tempe AZ in Pre-Law, a Masters Degree in Applied Psychology from USM, in Santa Monica, CA. He has earned certificates in animal behavior and psychology, Animal Training and Pet Sitting and is certified in Pet First Aid & CPR

Michael resides in Tustin CA with his golden retriever Bella.

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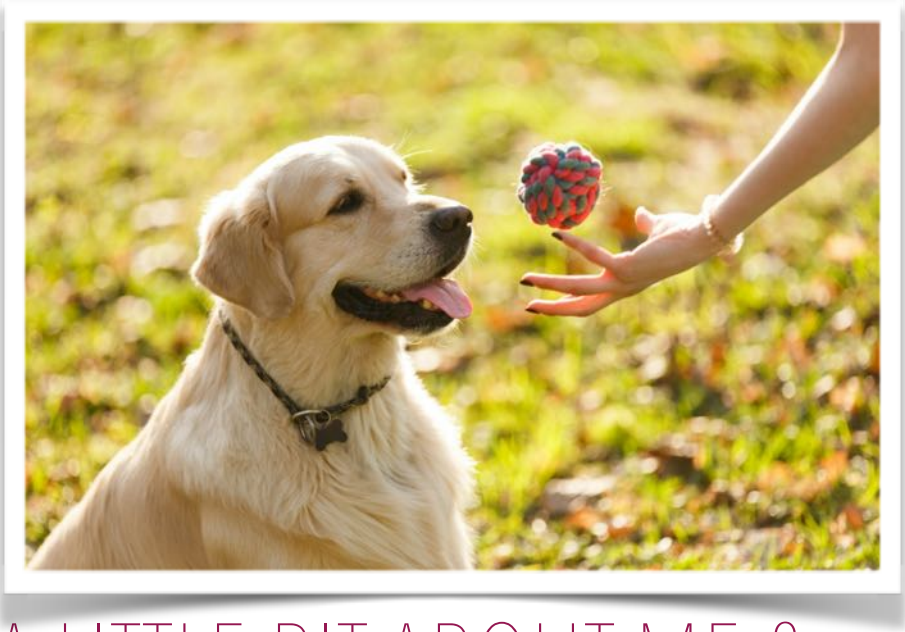

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME & WHY YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO ME

Do you mind if I give you a little background? After all, you may not know why you should even listen to me...

I grew up primarily in California. I say primarily because my father was in the military so we bounced back and forth from New England to California throughout my childhood until I reach High School, where I went to school in New Hampshire. My first pooch was a Black Labrador Retriever, named Samantha. I was an only child, both of my parents worked full-time, and making friends was a challenge for me because we moved every couple of years. So, Samantha was my best friend, companion, and playmate. I did everything with Sam and loved her more than anything. My relationship with Sam began what was to become a life long love of dogs and animals. Sam lived a long and healthy life and passed away while I was in college at the age of 16. I miss her to this day.

> ***We use an advanced cloud based software system for scheduling to ensure that "no pet is ever left behind."***

While I was finishing the last couple of years of my undergraduate degree my mom gave me another dog as a birthday present. Her name was Molly and she was a beautiful Golden Retriever. Molly embodied everything that Golden Retrievers are famous for, she was goofy, loving, fun, loyal, playful, beautiful and extremely smart. The thing I love about dogs, and Golden Retrievers, in particular, is how they just love you and want to be near you all of the time. That might not be ideal for everyone but I've never had huge circles of friends so the loyalty, love, and affection from my Golden Retriever, Molly, was just what I needed. Molly was my buddy all through my young adult

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life. She was there through relationships, graduation, buying my first home, bad times, good times whatever it was I was experiencing Molly was my rock and my friend.
I graduated from Arizona State University, in Tempe Arizona in 1995 and later moved to California and received a Master's Degree in Applied Psychology from USM in Santa Monica, CA. I could never really decide what I wanted to do but all the while I would be asked to pet sit for friends and neighbors when they went away. It never occurred to me that this could be something I could do full-time as a way to make a living.

After graduate school, I was offered a job at a financial services company and quickly worked my way up the corporate ladder to become one of their top executives. I made a lot of money but was deeply unhappy. I loved the people I worked with and was good at what I did but found the work and the industry professionally unfulfilling and extremely stressful.
Eventually, the company sold its portfolio of clients to a company on the east coast. I was laid off, given a severance package and found myself unemployed …. in the middle of the Great Recession!! The job prospects during that time were limited, to say the least. I had started pet sitting for people to help ends meet before I was laid off and with no job prospects, a mortgage payment, a car payment, and a pile of bills I decided I needed to do something fast. I had found a book called "The Six Figure Pet-Sitter" and was instantly stunned and intrigued. I had always wanted to own my own business but could never figure out what business I wanted to be in. As I mentioned earlier, I never imagined I could earn a living, much less a six-figure living, caring for people's pets, but this book was telling me I could not only earn a living but a really good living caring for other peoples pets. I, of course, bought the book. I later contacted the author of that book and she agreed to coach me for a while and so I decided to go for it … Golden Days Pet Services was born.

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It was as easy as that! Well, I can't say it was easy, but it wasn't hard. From my experience, when you are passionate about something and you pay attention everything just starts to flow and if you keep with it, everything eventually falls into place. Almost immediately, Golden Days provided the excitement and fulfillment I had been longing for in a career. The wagging tails and looks of content on the faces of my new "clients" were proof enough that this was the right profession for me.
Since 2014, I've grown my business exponentially. How did I do it? I put myself in the shoes of the pet owners, I am a pet owner to after all. I wanted to create a business that gave my clients a true sense of security and peace of mind, because of this my clients are not only loyal customers; they are raving fans! Everything I do and every decision I make related to the business is for them. I want to provide my clients with an infinite amount of value and high-quality service. Our clients know that when they leave their pets that they are in the BEST possible hands. I created The Ten Golden Rules, they are the 10 core principles we follow to ensure that our clients and their beloved pets receive the best possible care with an exceptional and consistent service experience.

After years of success, I am proud of growing this extraordinary business. My job is both rewarding and gratifying. After all, it is my dream job. ;)

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MISTAKE #1 HIRING A NON-PROFESSIONAL

The Neighborhood Kid

I love to save money just like everyone else does, so I understand the temptation to hire the neighborhood kid as your pet sitter. I'll be direct on this piece of advice- **Don't do it!!** You want to be very careful about whom you let into your home when you're not there and whom you entrust to care for one of your family members. Trusting the neighborhood kid with the responsibility of your family pets and possibly your home, in my opinion, is a real gamble. It's not a "business relationship" and therefore will not be treated as one. Let's face it, most kids are irresponsible and easily distracted, which is why we call them "kids"! I certainly would not want to leave the safety and care of my pet's and my home in the care of someone who would not make it their utmost priority. You can definitely save some money by going that route, but are you certain that he or she is going to even show up and if they do, are they taking the best possible care of your home and your pets? Would they know what to do in an emergency? I'm going to venture a guess … probably not. And don't forget you are legal responsible should anyone get injured or worse while in your home. I pretty confident the neighborhood kid, although well intentioned, does not have insurance coverage or workmen's comp. I'm sorry! I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but after having been in business so long, I've heard too many horror stories. In the end, it's your decision, but I truly believe, particularly with service, you get what you pay for.

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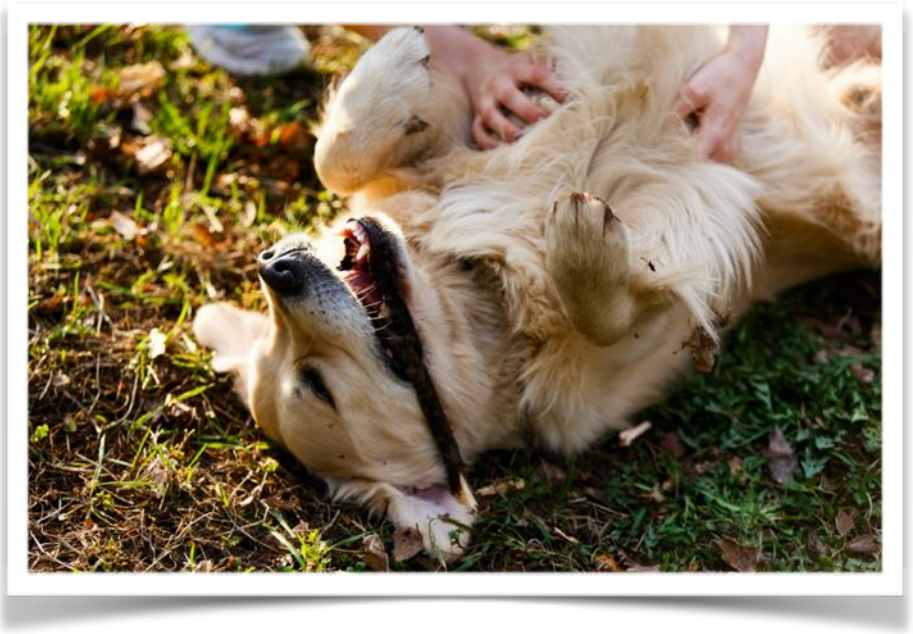

The PROS of working with a well-established company:

- **SAFETY**: A well-established company has experience in the industry and therefore has learned what systems need to be put in place for the safety of the pets and of the client's homes.
- **LONGEVITY**: A well-established business is more likely to be around for a long while, which provides thqe pet owners with the ability to establish a long-term and trusted relationship.

GOLDEN DAYS SYSTEMS ENSURE THAT OUR CLIENT'S HOMES AND PETS ARE SAFE AND SOUND:

1. We have an advanced online cloud-based scheduling system that instantly communicates cancellation and changes to our team. We also have dedicated team members who are responsible for managing our team of pet care professionals.

2. We utilize an advanced cloud-based software system for scheduling to ensure that "no pet is ever left behind." This system tracks the various assignments and knows when the assigned team member arrives at each assignment. Pet Care Professionals on the Golden Days team are also responsible for checking this system to ensure their visits and walks are completed in the system throughout the day. Our office makes sure that all visits are completed. If for some reason they're not, they immediately follows-up with the assigned team member to make sure that the pet has actually been visited. In the case of an emergency, another pet care professional will be immediately dispatched to care for the clients' pets. Hence, NO PET IS EVER LEFT BEHIND!

3. Our pet care professionals automatically receive an email every morning with their scheduled assignments for that day. Additionally, they are instantly updated on our mobile application of any changes or cancellations and receive a pop-up notification alerting them to these changes. We also contact a team member by phone and/or text message to confirm they received the change or cancellation notification. This may seem like overkill but that's how important we think this is and I know it's important to our client's.

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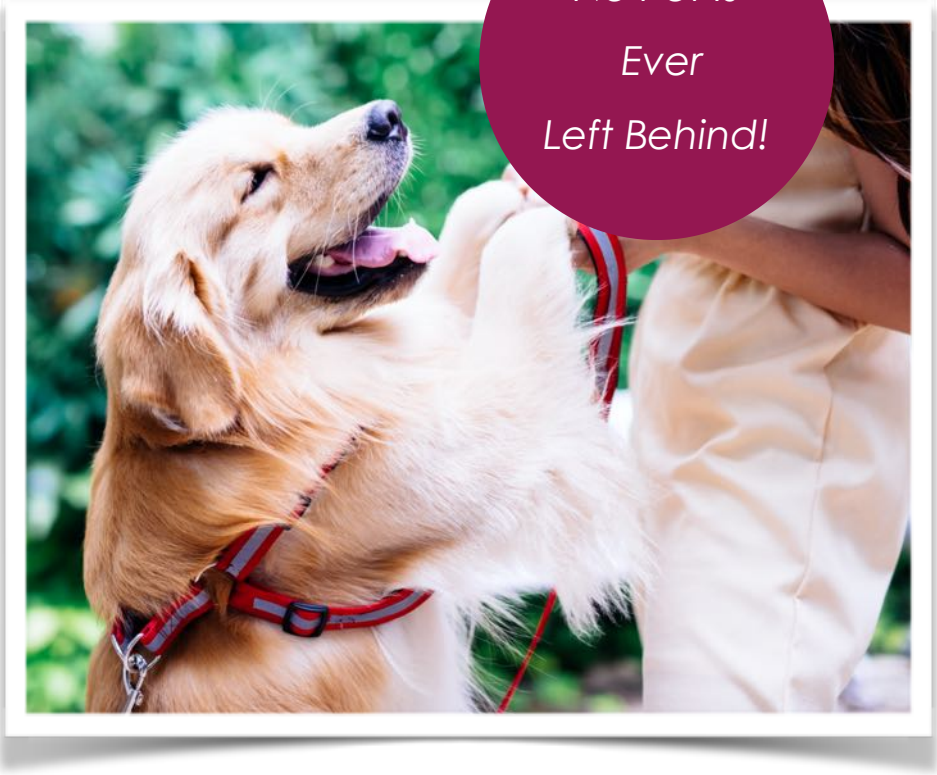
4. We provide our client's with an online web-portal and mobile phone application that enables them to keep up to date on their pets care, request changes and if necessary contact their pet care professional and/or Golden Days Pet Services. The system records when the sitter arrives in the home and how long they've stayed. It also allows for notes, photos and videos to be left by their pet care professional. The client is also able to leave notes or send messages to their assigned provider as well.

5. For our pet sitting client's they always remain in control of their house keys. We only keep keys on file in rare circumstances. Clients can either schedule a key pick-up and drop-off service or use a "realtor lockbox" to exchange their keys with their pet care professional. Trust me! For our clients that use our services intermittently, it is safest when the client remains in control of their keys. For our daily dog walking client's we do retain a key and a back-up key is kept at Golden Days as a back-up. Our daily dog walking clients can also use a "realtor lockbox" but we will also retain a key at the office as a back-up for unforeseen emergencies.

6. Clients are able to update their own client and pet care information on the client portal. This allows us to always have the most current information about the client's pets and their homes on file. Client's can also request service appointments, update vaccination records, send and receive messages regarding their pets, and view, print and download photos of their pets' adventures with Golden Days.

At Golden Days Pet Services we continual explore, update and implement the latest technologies when it provides better security, ease of use for our clients and makes sense for everyone concerned. We invest heavily in training programs, continually evaluate and update services practices, operational efficiencies and technology's that support the business and our clients.



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In my opinion, hiring an established pet sitting business provides the customer with greater support and flexibility. The larger Golden Days becomes the more I have to offer to my customers. I'm certainly not trying to come down on the small guys. I've just been through it, so I'm clear on what the differences are. To make it easy for you, I've listed the pros and cons in an easy list format.

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MISTAKE #2 HIRING THE "SIDE HUSTLE COMPANY "OR THE "HOBBY SITTER"

The New Guy / The Hobby Sitter

Another bit of advice - avoid any one person non-business entity or hobby sitters. There is a very big difference between a pet care company that has had experience in the industry for a couple of years and a person that has simply had some business cards printed and just recently started. First of all, many of these hobby sitters, as they are known in the industry, do not last long.

People tend to think that all that is needed to run a pet sitting business is a deep love for animals. That, as I personally discovered, is only a part of the equation. I know this first-hand because it is one of the primary reasons I started my company.

I quickly learned that it's not just about how much I loved dogs. It is a pet care BUSINESS. A business that carries with it the responsibility of insuring the health and wellbeing of a living breathing member of someones family. In many cases, we are entrusted with the security of one of the biggest financial investments a person will make in their lifetimes a client's homes. So, as pet sitter's we are trusted with access to client's houses, a pet's wellbeing, and also important and private information. This is not a small task and should not be taken lightly.

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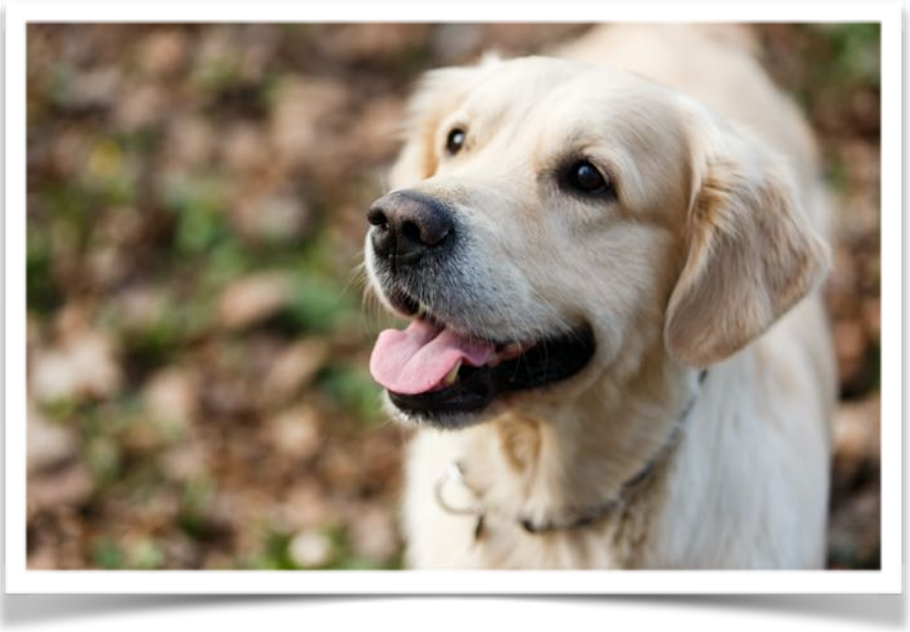

When I was a new business, I made mistakes because I did not have the proper systems and procedures in place. It took me a while to iron out all these important details and as my business grew it demanded it! Wonderful pet lovers manage many of the businesses out there, but unfortunately lack experience in all of the other parts that make up a solid pet care business and they don't know how to create and implement the operational procedures necessary to ensure that their clients and their pets are fully protected. Another downside is that these start-up companies or hobby sitters usually end up closing their doors a year or two into their business because some, as I mentioned, weren't knowledgeable enough on the business end of things, others weren't prepared for the reality of operating a pet care company and other we're just needed some extra money, commonly referred to as a side hustle these days, and once they fulfill that financial objective they're out.

My advice is to try and find a reputable, well-established company. In my opinion, this is the wisest decision you can make because they have had the time to learn the industry and to create the necessary systems to ensure that your homes and your pets are safe and sound.

Establish Business PROS

- Professionalism! An established company will more likely than not run things on a professional level. At Golden Days, for example, our clients know that they are trusting their loved ones, their homes, their personal information, and property to a well-established, experienced, qualified, insured and bonded business. We are always available to help our clients, as well as speak with anyone who is interested in designing a pet care plan of their own. We are members of Pet Sitters International, The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters and The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals among others.

- A large company is going to have greater cash flow and capital to work with therefore they can afford the increased expense of creating a FANTASTIC business. The more successful Golden Days gets the more money I have to put back into the business, which in turn directly adds more value for my clients. For example, background checks, proper training for our staff, the Pet First Aid and CPR certification classes, credit card processing, monthly database service, our office staff, website updates, our ezine "Golden Days Press", the

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Golden Days blog. The list goes on and on.

- A large company is going to be able to guarantee availability. In Golden Days's case 99.9% of the time when a client calls requesting service they will absolutely be accommodated.

- A large company always has someone waiting in the wings in the case of an emergency.

- A larger company is going to have less staff turnover, because they will have the proper systems in place to manage a team effectively as well as provide them with enough business to make money.

Large Business CONS

Although a large company will be able to guarantee availability for you, you may not get the same pet sitter each and every time (though we do try and always assign the primary pet sitter on the account.)

A larger company may have more stringent policies and procedures in place to ensure that their standard operating procedures run smoothly. Examples of this may be, cancellation policies, payment policies, scheduling policies, etc.

Small Business PROS

With a small business you're more likely to have the same pet sitter for each scheduled assignment.

Small Business CONS

- A small business may not have the funds to have all the bells and whistles that a larger company can afford. Examples, credit card processing, and interactive website, mobile

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application, staff training, scheduling database etc.

- With the lack of funds for a proper scheduling system comes the issue of safety and missed pet sitting visits.

- There is a higher rate of staff turnover because the company is unable to provide their team members with the amount of work to keep them happy. For that reason, it's also difficult to attract a higher caliber of people to work. How do I know this? Because I went through it! I know first-hand. One of the best things about having a business of our size is that I now attract incredible people who are knocking down my door to become a part of our team.

- A smaller company is less likely to have the systems and procedures in place to run their businesses effectively, which unfortunately results with mistakes on the customer's end. How do I know this? Because I went through it!

- A small business is less likely to be available for last-minute needs because they don't have the staff power to accommodate last-minute requests.

- A small business may not be insured and bonded, though they should be! In my opinion this is not something that you can cut corners on. Whatever business you are considering hiring whether large or small, make certain that they are insured and bonded.

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MISTAKE #3
NOT DOING YOUR RESEARCH

When considering which company to hire to care for your pets, it's important to find out about the sitters. Who are they? What is their background with pets? Do they have references? Have they had a background check completed? How old are they? Are they Pet First Aid & CPR Certified? It's important to know exactly who is coming into your home to care for your pets.

When I started building my business, I attracted and contracted a lot of college students. I quickly learned that hiring a college kid is no better than asking the neighborhood kid down the street. College kids did not have the sense of responsibility that Golden Days needed and my clients deserved. I did have a few wonderful college-aged pet sitters, but as a whole, I decided that the demographic was not the best choice to represent my company; I only want the best for my clients.

For the safety of my clients, I started running background checks on anyone that I was considering becoming a member of our team. Wow! Am I happy I did this! You think if someone looks put-together and professionally presents him or herself and they provide glowing references, that they are a sure good fit. WRONG!!!! The stuff that comes back on these background checks would blow your hair back. My suggestion to you would be to make sure of the fact that any company you hire runs full background checks on their staff

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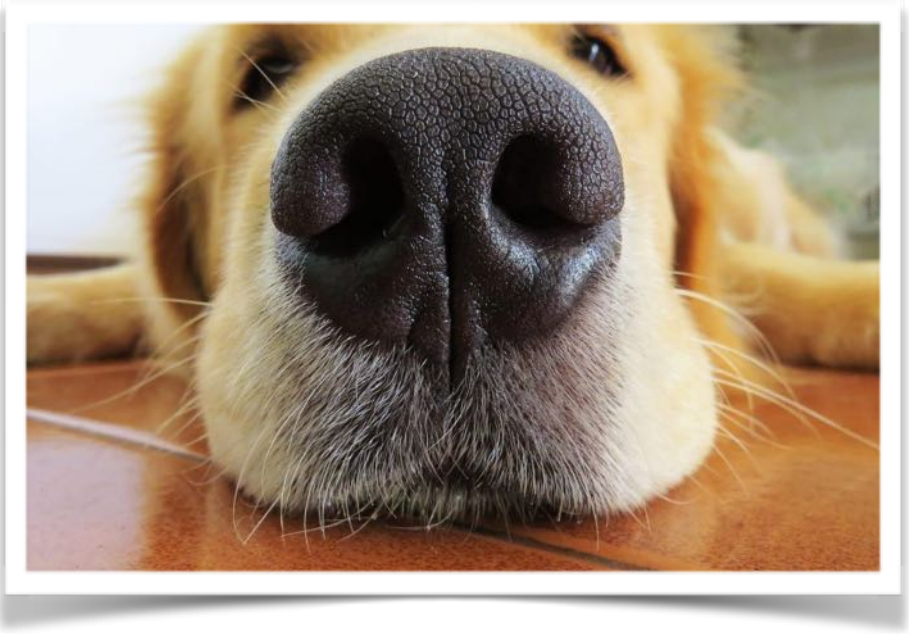

members. If you decide to hire a solo-act business, I would suggest that you ask them to provide you a background check. Trust me on this! You will be so happy you took the extra precaution.

The Golden Days Team

Golden Days only hires truly dedicated pet care professionals. We do not hire contractors or sub-out jobs. We are devoted to hiring and training the most caring and qualified pet lovers around. It more the norm in the pet care industry currently to hire independent contractors because, to be honest, it appears cheaper. Financially cheaper it is but when you factor in the inconsistent service delivery, lack of quality control, and many other questionable variables I won't get into here, I simply wasn't willing to take that gamble with my clients who trust me to provide them with best.

We only hire employees for many reasons but first and foremost it is to ensure that we have complete control and accountability over the quality and consistency of the services we provide; When you hire a company that uses independent contractors they are just that independent. They have no say in how that independent contractor does their job and have no control over how the quality of services they deliver. They are not permitted by law to train them, and they are not allowed to tell them how to do their assignments. I never knew about any of this until I got into the pet care business. And let me tell you, not only was I shocked but it made me very uncomfortable.

The Golden Days Screening Process:

1. We conduct **a face-to-face interview** at the Golden Days office.
2. We then conductÂ **a full criminal background check** on applicants into consideration.
3. WeÂ **call all professional references**.
4. WeÂ **hire our sitters on a trial-basis/probationary period** and run **ongoing evaluations** to ensure that our clients are 100% satisfied and that the sitter is living up to Golden Days standards.
5. After they are accepted to the Golden Days team, **each sitter is required to receive their Pet First Aid and CPR Certification.**
6. We **solicit ongoing feedback on all sitters** to make certain that they are living up to the standards of Golden Days

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Summary

I realize I covered a ton of information in this report. My intention was not to overwhelm you but rather to illustrate how important it is that you do your homework when it comes to hiring a person or company to care for your home and your pets.

A quick rundown of my suggestions:

1. Go with a well-established company that has been in business for at least 2 years.
2. Go with a larger company that is insured and bonded and has the proper systems in place to ensure the safety of your loved ones and your home.Â
3. Do your research and find out exactly who is coming into your home. You can never be too careful.

Best of luck with your search! If I can be of help in any way, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

If you're interested in having us create a customized pet care plan for you, feel free to either call the office at
(949) 445-3738 or (833) 787-9255
or email us at
info@goldendayspets.com

To learn more about Golden Days services, click here.

All my best and happy tails,

Michael O'Neil
Pet Lover, Owner &. Pack Leader

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